

Horn Point
Laboratory



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- CHESAPEAKE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORY
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UMCES Oyster Hatchery Rears Record 750 Million Spat for Chesapeake Bay in 2009

The UMCES Horn Point Laboratory [oyster hatchery](#) produced nearly 750 million oyster spat for Chesapeake Bay restoration in 2009, the most ever grown in one year at the laboratory's Eastern Shore facility. Record production levels and expanded partnerships with the [Oyster Recovery Partnership](#) and the [Maryland Department of Natural Resources](#) have fueled the growth of the State's oyster restoration programs, resulting in the revitalization of nearly 350 acres of oyster reefs, planted on 26 sites across the Bay and its rivers. The 2009 growing season eclipsed the previous record of nearly 600 million oyster spat set in 2008.

"Since the hatchery expanded in 2004, we have been able to improve the efficiency of our spat production by taking advantage of new technologies and a better understanding of oyster husbandry practices that have benefited from the sound science approach employed in our hatchery program," said [Dr. Donald "Mutt" Meritt](#), who oversees the hatchery for UMCES. "This year, the combination of better Choptank River water quality along with our experienced and dedicated hatchery, field and planting teams, allowed us to bring large-scale restoration to a new level."



"Through their close collaboration, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and the Oyster Recovery Partnership are changing the face of oyster restoration in Maryland," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "At a time when we are escalating all of our efforts to restore the Bay, this record planting -- along with record involvement by citizen stewards in oyster restoration -- gives us tremendous confidence for increasing the Bay's oyster population."

Oyster reefs are critical to the Bay's recovery. A healthy oyster reef not only filters the Bay's dirty waters, but also provides crucial substrate for an underwater community that furnishes valuable life support for fish and crabs.

The oyster restoration process is complex. Adult oysters collected by Maryland watermen as part of the restoration program are spawned at the Horn Point Laboratory oyster hatchery. The oyster larvae produced by these spawns are fed cultured algae and allowed to develop under controlled conditions until they are ready to set -- the process whereby oyster larvae permanently attach themselves to shell. The larvae are placed into specially constructed tanks at Horn Point that have been filled by ORP with aged, cleaned oyster shells.

The resulting shells with the newly created oyster spat (spat on shell) are loaded onto vessels for deployment and then planted on pretreated restoration sites throughout the Bay by the Oyster ...

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), UMCES, the Maryland Waterman's Association and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Major financial support for these efforts comes from NOAA, DNR, UMCES and ORP.

"Recent investments by the state have set the stage for UMCES to more than double hatchery production over the next few years," said [UMCES President Dr. Donald F. Boesch](#). "Once construction of the new oyster setting facility is completed next year, we hope to be able to produce up to two billion oyster spat a year."